



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Massachusetts State Office

451 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002
413-253-4350, fax 413-253-4375
www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 4, 2004

CONTACT: Diane Baedeker Petit
Public Affairs Specialist
413-253-4371
Diane.Petit@ma.usda.gov

\$9 million in federal conservation programs available to assist Massachusetts farmers this year

AMHERST, MA— The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced that more than \$9 million in federal conservation cost-share funding is available this year to help Massachusetts farmers address natural resource concerns on their land. Bay State farmers are encouraged to apply for these conservation programs by February 1st.

With financial and technical assistance from NRCS, farmers and other landowners will continue to promote environmental quality on farmland, address water quality and quantity challenges, and protect valuable wetland ecosystems and wildlife habitat.

For details and to apply, contact a local USDA Service Center (listed on-line at <http://offices.usda.gov> or in the phone book under Federal Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture). General program information is available on the NRCS Massachusetts website at www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

"These funds will help Massachusetts landowners remain good environmental stewards by working in partnership with NRCS field staff in communities across the commonwealth," said State Conservationist Cecil B. Currin. "USDA remains committed to providing conservation tools and resources to ensure that Bay State land remains healthy and productive."

Cost-share funding is available through several voluntary conservation programs authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. Through these programs, landowners may receive up to 75 percent of installation costs for conservation practices, depending on producer, land and practice eligibility criteria. Following is a breakdown of funding by program.

-- MORE --

Program	FY2005
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.	\$5,496,259
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) WHIP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to landowners who want to improve fish and wildlife habitat or restore natural ecosystems on their land.	\$1,546,231
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) GRP helps landowners restore and protect grassland, rangeland, pastureland, shrubland and certain other lands, and provides assistance for rehabilitating grasslands.	\$1,250,854
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) WRP offers an opportunity for landowners to voluntarily protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property.	\$529,000
Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) AMA helps farmers adopt conservation practices and investment strategies that will reduce or mitigate risks to their agricultural enterprises. In Massachusetts, cost-share is available to producers for drought mitigation.	\$365,878
TOTAL	\$9,188,222

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture that provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. NRCS has seven Massachusetts field offices in Greenfield, Hadley, Holden, Hyannis, Pittsfield, Westford, and West Wareham, which work with local conservation districts and other partners to serve farmers and landowners throughout the commonwealth.

#